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DEPT FOR AF/E AND A/S FRAZER

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [SO](#) [ET](#)  
SUBJECT: Somalia-Telcon with NGRC Chairman Ali Mahdi

Classified by PolOff Hodan Hassan. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (SBU) On May 3, Somalia Political Unit staff had a conference call with National Reconciliation and Governance Committee (NGRC) Chairman Ali Mahdi on current developments in the planning for the upcoming National Reconciliation Congress.

¶2. (SBU) In the conversation, we emphasized that with the cessation of fighting, this is an opportune time to shift the focus back to reconciliation and dialogue. We urged the NGRC to make public a tentative agenda and details on the selection process for the Congress scheduled on June 14. We also inquired about reports that the Transitional Federal Parliament and several cabinet members are trying to push through legislation that would remove the independent status of the NGRC.

¶3. (SBU) The Chairman explained that preparations for the Congress are well underway. The committee, which includes an executive board and secretariat, met in Baidoa several weeks ago and divided themselves into three groups to work on different phases of the Congress. Mahdi stated that there are plans to send teams to the 18 regions of Somalia to explain the goals of the Congress and encourage participation. (Comment: "18 regions" includes Somaliland. End Comment) He blamed part of the slow pace of developments on lack of immediate resources from the international community.

¶4. (C) Mahdi reported he had positive discussions on plans for the Congress with elders from various clans in Mogadishu. He stated both TFG President Yusuf and Speaker of Parliament Adan Madobe reaffirmed their support for the Congress in a joint meeting last week. Mahdi also stated that contrary to recent reports, the Parliament does not intend to challenge the independence of the NGRC. (Comment: We have subsequently learned that on May 1 the Parliament provided Mahdi with a letter that confirmed Parliament's support for the NGRC and its mandate; oddly enough, also on May 1 Parliament passed a resolution on the "Final Reconciliation Conference of Somalia" -- a name not heard before -- in which no mention is made of the NGRC. End Comment) Mahdi promised to keep in communication with the Embassy and stated his appreciation for USG support for the Congress.  
RANNEBERGER